



SONOMA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF
CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

1755 Copperhill Parkway • PO Box 6534 • Santa Rosa CA 95406
1-888-271-4214 • FAX 707-565-4018

Cynthia L. Moore • *Director*

Jeanne M. Miskel • *Chief Child Support Attorney*

August 24, 2004

FF 1864

AUG 31 REC'D

GRAND JURY

The Honorable Allan Hardcastle
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
Superior Court, Department 14

SUBJECT: Response to 2003-2004 Grand Jury Report

Dear Judge Hardcastle:

Attached is my response to the Findings and Recommendations presented by the Sonoma County Grand Jury in their Final Report dated July 1, 2004.

Please contact me at 707-565-4141 if there are any questions regarding the responses, or if additional information is desired.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cynthia L. Moore".
Cynthia L. Moore
Child Support Services Director

Attachment:

Department of Child Support Services Response

cc: Members, Board of Supervisors
Denise Gordon, Court Executive Officer
Mike Chrystal, County Administrator
Eeve Lewis, County Clerk



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**CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES DEPARTMENT
RESPONSE TO THE 2003-2004 GRAND JURY REPORT**

**CHILD SUPPORT PAYMENTS-PROCESS INTEGRITY
FINDINGS – Page 22**

F5 – CSS payers are advised in general terms of the collection process, but not of the specific procedures when disputes arise. It is not sufficiently clear to the non-custodial parent that an immediate response to a dispute is imperative to avoid subsequent IRS or Franchise Tax Board action. Payers who are not in arrears and unfamiliar with the CSS process will not be aware that disputed amounts still under review might cause unwarranted penalties and consequences due to the automated workings of the computer system.

Response: The respondent agrees with the Finding. Recognizing the confusion that both applicants and obligors have about the child support enforcement program, a new Intake Unit was established by this department in 2003. This Unit has become proactive in making initial telephone contacts with both parties of new cases, encouraging them to participate in a personal interview to gain a better understanding of CSS procedures (including the consequences of automated reporting).

RECOMMENDATIONS, page 23

R1 - CSS should add a paragraph to the initial notification to non-custodial parents (Contact Order) that clearly outlines:

- How CSS calculates and establishes the account balances,***
- The timing of those steps,***
- How the non-custodial parent will be notified of the specifics, and***
- The potential consequences of non-response.***

Response: The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.

CSS program documents are generated from an automated documents processing system controlled by the C.A.S.E.S. Consortium, which is managed by the City & County of San Francisco, under the oversight and of the State Department of Child Support Services. C.A.S.E.S. is one of two mandated systems utilized by most of the counties in the State. As stated in response to Finding #5, CSS staff have already contacted the responsible C.A.S.E.S. Consortium workgroup regarding this recommendation to determine what priority this request would receive over other work-in-progress. Our department will draft proposed language pursuant to this recommendation for submission to the Workgroup, but have no authority or control over the timeline or priority our request will be given by the Consortium. In the interim, the DCSS agrees to include the recommended information by updating the Sonoma County CSS

Program Handbook which is provided to non-custodial parents at case-intake; and, to develop a bright colored attachment to the "contact letters" that alerts the non-custodial parent about the importance of contacting our office to review any disputed accounting or child support order information. I anticipate that these interim measures can be instituted by October 1, 2004.

R2 - CSS staff involved in the calculation of account balances must be made aware of the need to verify arrears with all parties involved and balance their considerations before data is released to the state systems that trigger tax refund or bank account attachments. This assumes the parties have been given proper notice and have had the opportunity to respond.

Response: The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.

The DCSS will provide "refresher" training to all staff opening new cases with an existing order to ensure that they have taken all appropriate actions to verify arrears balances prior to opening accounts, giving both parties proper notice and an opportunity to respond should they dispute the balance due. This instruction will be incorporated into future training programs for newly hired case management employees.